

III. Remarks

Claims 1-16 have been cancelled; newly presented claims 17-33 are pending in the application.

Claim Objections

The examiners claim objections have been rendered moot by the cancellation of the original claims.

Claim Rejections 35 USC §112

The examiners claim objections have been rendered moot by the cancellation of the original claims.

Claim Rejections -35 USC §102

Claims 1-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Steeghs (US 5,476,532). Although the original claims have been cancelled, they have been cancelled to overcome formatting problems and not in light of the prior art. Applicants believe the newly presented claims are of equivalent scope to those cancelled and therefore believe it appropriate to discuss the Steeghs references.

The examiner states that the Steeghs anticipates the claimed invention in that, Steeghs teaches a method for lowering the incidence of clustering of reducible iron-containing material during the direct reduction of the material comprising contacting the reducible iron-containing material prior to the direct reduction with a cluster-abating, effective amount of a dispersion.

The examiner goes on to state that Steeghs' dispersion comprises at least one fluxing agent and at least one particulate material that is substantially non-hardening in the presence of water (column 2, lines 12-21). The contacting may take place by spraying or dipping (column 5, line 2) and the reducible iron-containing material is in the form of pellets comprising a binder and other additives. Binders include a clay, such as bentonite and montmorillonite, a water-soluble natural polymer, a modified natural polymer, modified starch, starch derivatives, and a synthetic polymer (column 2, line 65 to column 3, line 6).

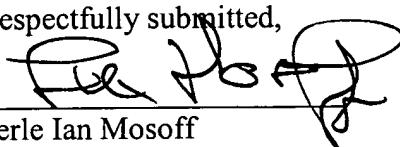
What is missing in Steeghs is the inclusion in the coating of a hardening material. Steeghs not only does not disclose a hardening component in his coating composition, Steeghs expressly excludes hardening compositions. At column 3, line 67 through column 4 line 5, Steeghs discusses the components of his coating composition. He explicitly defines particulate materials which are substantially nonhardening in the presence of water and uses cement as the example of something that is not a "particulate material being substantially nonhardening in the presence of water" when he says, at column 4, lines 4-5, "... unlike, for nonlimiting example, Portland cement." [emphasis supplied]

Thus, the particulate material of Steeghs is nonhardening. The other materials in Steeghs are the flux [column 4, lines 41-47] and the clay binder, both of which are inherently nonhardening. It is therefore apparent that Steeghs does not disclose or suggest applicants use of both nonhardening and hardening components in the coating.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and discussion, therefore, it is respectfully submitted that the present invention as defined in the pending claims 17 to 333 is in full compliance with all statutory requirements, and therefore, it is earnestly requested that the Examiner's rejections be withdrawn and the pending claims be allowed in their present form. However, if for any reason the Examiner should consider this application not to be in condition for allowance, the Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned attorney at the number listed below prior to issuing a further Action. Any fee due with this paper, not fully covered by an enclosed check, may be charged on Deposit Account 50-1290.

Respectfully submitted,



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